



THE BEST WAYS TO *Get Your Heart Healthy*

Heart disease is the number one killer of women and men in the United States. It develops when the blood vessels supplying the heart become clogged with fatty deposits, or plaque. After the blood vessels narrow, blood flow to the heart is reduced. That means oxygen and nutrients can't get to the heart as easily. Eventually, an area of plaque can break open. This may cause a blood clot to form on the plaque's surface. A blood clot can block blood flowing to the heart. That can cause a heart attack.

Fortunately, there's a lot you can do to protect your heart and lower your risk of developing heart disease. Take note of the following.

TALK WITH YOUR DOC & KNOW YOUR NUMBERS

The sad truth is that the vast majority of adults have heart disease and don't know it. Early heart disease may not cause any symptoms. That's why regular checkups with your doctor are so important. Blood pressure and cholesterol levels can provide early signs. People should

see their doctor, find out their cholesterol and blood pressure numbers, and if needed, take medication.

Although early heart disease might not cause symptoms, advanced heart disease may cause chest pressure, shortness of breath, or fatigue. Some people may feel lightheaded, dizzy, or confused. Tell your doctor if you're experiencing any symptoms.



MAKE HEALTHY CHOICES

The lifestyle choices you make every day have a profound effect on your heart. The most important things for everyone to do to keep their heart healthy is to keep their entire body healthy. Eat a healthy diet, get plenty of physical activity, maintain a lean body weight, and avoid smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke.

Following a heart-healthy eating plan is important for everyone. Aim to make half of every meal fruits and vegetables. About a quarter of your plate should be whole grain. And about a quarter should be lean protein, like lean meat or seafood. Avoid foods that have a lot of salt in them. Salt is a major contributor to high blood pressure and risk of heart disease.

KNOW THE SIGNS

For some people, having a heart attack is the first sign of heart disease. Pain or discomfort in your chest or upper

body, a cold sweat, or shortness of breath are all signs of a heart attack. If you feel any of these signs, get medical help right away. Acting fast can save your life and prevent permanent damage.

Heart disease and heart attacks are major risk factors for cardiac arrest, which is when the heart suddenly stops beating. Blood stops flowing to the brain and other parts of the body. If not treated within minutes, cardiac arrest can lead to death.

Heart disease and heart attacks can also make it harder for your heart's electrical system to work. As a result, an irregular heartbeat, or arrhythmia, can occur. Your heart may beat too fast, too slow, or with an uneven rhythm. A dangerous arrhythmia can lead to cardiac arrest.

Regular checkups help ensure that a doctor will check your heart for problems. Heart disease and arrhythmias can be treated to lower the risk of cardiac arrest.

Source: <https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2017/11/healthy-body-happy-heart>



ASK YOUR DOCTOR

Am I at risk for heart disease?

What tests do I need?

Is my blood pressure okay? If not, what should I do?

Is my cholesterol level okay? If not, what should I do?

Is my weight okay?

How much exercise do I need?

Am I at risk for diabetes?

How can you help me quit smoking?